



## **FOR IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE**

Lowe's Contact: James Frison, Director of Community Relations  
1-800-644-3561 ext. 210  
[www.toolboxforeducation.com](http://www.toolboxforeducation.com)

Au Gres-Sims School District Contact: Jeffrey Collier, Superintendent  
989-876-7150  
[www.ags-schools.org](http://www.ags-schools.org)

### **Au Gres-Sims School District Receives \$5,000 Grant from Lowe's for an Advanced School Yard Habitat STEM Greenhouse Program**

**February 8, 2018**

**Au Gres, MI** – The Au Gres-Sims School District has received a \$5,000 Lowe's Toolbox for Education Grant for an advanced School Yard Habitat STEM (Science, Technology Engineering and Math) Greenhouse Program.

We are thrilled to announce that Lowe's has awarded Au Gres-Sims funding for their advanced School Yard Habitat STEM Greenhouse Program. Our grant application was based on the goal of increasing environmental stewardship while supporting dynamic and multi-faceted STEM studies at Au Gres-Sims. In partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a 60'x40' cold-storage greenhouse has been transferred to the Au Gres-Sims campus. Lowe's donated monies will help supply water lines and faucets, ventilators and exhaust fans, planting tools and implements, trays, pots, and soil. We look forward to sharing the advanced School Yard Habitat STEM Greenhouse Program with the greater Au Gres community. This project was worthy of funding because of the environmental significance it can have now and far into the future. The addition of a greenhouse on the Au Gres-Sims School District's campus will be a benefit to the community by providing creative 21<sup>st</sup> century Place-based Education (PBE) and hands-on learning opportunities for students.

#### **Project Description**

Au Gres-Sims School District has designed a unique STEM Curriculum Overlay that focuses on four primary pillars of study to complement their science curriculum: Robotics and Engineering, Watersheds and Ecosystems, Meteorology and Climates, and School Yard Habitats. The transfer and erection of the greenhouse is a vital component within the district's broader school yard habitats STEM pillar of focus. The district, located on the Lake Huron shoreline, includes both Big and Little Charity Islands.

Au Gres-Sims students, working with a host of regional, state, and national partners including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Huron Pines, and the Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, are continuing their longitudinal STEM research studies. These experientially designed learning projects focus on invasive species and greenhouse propagation of the threatened and



federally protected Pitcher's Thistle plant on Big Charity Island. Big Charity Island, located within the school district's boundaries, is part of the Michigan Islands National Wildlife Refuge.

Each fall and spring, Au Gres-Sims fourth grade students visit Big Charity Island to inventory Pitcher's Thistle locations and monitor established growth. Future visits by the student-scientists will now also include inventorying and collecting seeds from the protected Pitcher's Thistle plants through a special federally approved waiver that allow the seeds to be safely returned to campus. High school students will then utilize the greenhouse facility to grow Pitcher's Thistle plugs. On the second of their bi-annual visits to the Island in the spring, fourth graders will return and transplant the raised plugs for propagation back on the Island.

Au Gres-Sims School District Superintendent, Jeffrey Collier, stated, "Au Gres-Sims is grateful to receive this impressive grant from Lowe's. We are proud to partner with visionary organizations like Lowe's who understand the need to not only promote dynamic and sustainable STEM programs within schools, but to advance the work of environmental stewardship throughout the Saginaw Bay Watershed." Brook Begres, fourth grade teacher and science department co-chair at Au Gres-Sims Elementary, added, "Thank you to Lowe's for recognizing the value of our STEM programs and financially supporting these unique opportunities for our students to realize that they can make a difference in the real-world."

#### **About Au Gres-Sims School District**

Au Gres-Sims School District, a "Destination District," is located in Arenac County, Michigan. The district is nestled on the sunrise side of Lake Huron and includes the Charity Islands. There are roughly 27 miles of shoreline, which ranges from natural frontage and sugar sand beaches to residential property. Au Gres is renowned for offering an incredible quality of life, abundant natural resources, and a rich cultural history.

Au Gres-Sims School District is proud to be known as a "public school with a private school feel" for its combined strength in academic achievement and entire preschool through twelfth grade school experiences. Au Gres-Sims is a progressive district that is recognized statewide, as well as nationally, for consistently and proactively modeling best educational practices using data-driven research and advanced technology. The district is engaged in many local, regional, and national partnerships with a variety of entities eager to actively immerse themselves in sustainable STEM programs, including Watersheds and Ecosystems; Charity Island Invasive Species Studies; Robotics and Engineering; Threatened Plant Greenhouse Propagation; School Yard Habitats; and Meteorology.

#### **About Lowe's Toolbox for Education**

For more than 65 years, Lowe's has supported the communities we call home. At a time when schools are struggling to support the basic needs of their students, the Lowe's Gives Foundation (LGF) recognizes the importance of financial support.

At Lowe's, we believe community involvement extends beyond the boundaries of the traditional retail setting. Whether it's helping improve neighborhood schools, assisting with natural disaster recovery, or taking an active role in programs that make our neighborhoods better places to live, we are committed to helping our neighbors through alliances with well-respected organizations. All K-12 public schools in the United States are eligible for the Toolbox for Education program. More information is available at: [www.ToolboxforEducation.com](http://www.ToolboxforEducation.com)

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